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United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Chair Report
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WMUN 5.0 UNHCR

Chair Report

"The impact of COVID-19 on refugee camps"

Introduction of Chairs:

Committee President: Rawan Alanzi

Welcome delegates to Worldwide MUN 5.0! My name is Rawan Alanzi and I will be your Committee President for this conference. I am 16 years old, and will be going into my final year of high school this fall to complete my A-levels. I hope to pursue a career in Law with International Relations. Some of my hobbies and interests include volunteering, swimming, and I've recently started crochet! Model UN is the extracurricular I do best since 7th grade, this upcoming conference will be my 19th MUN experience, as well as my 5th time chairing for WMUN. COVID-19 has affected all of our lives in many different ways, and this committee aims to investigate the impact of the virus on refugee camps. I believe that this topic will get you all debating and I can't wait to meet you all!

Chair: Ghalia AlSadhan

Hello delegates! My name is Ghalia AlSadhan, and I'll be chairing this UNHCR committee. I'm really excited to be sharing this experience with who we anticipate to be amazing delegates. I'm a 19 year old first year law student and I live in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. I very much enjoy debating cause I'm very stubborn and like to deliver my point as I see and believe in it. Politics is my passion, it's something I enjoy reading and learning about. I am very optimistic about life, and hopefully one day I can leave an impact to be remembered by. I can't wait to meet all of you and have a wonderful time together in this great experience!

Committee Introduction

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is a global organization dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people. The UNHCR works to ensure that everybody has the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge, having fled violence, persecution, war or disaster at home. Since 1950, UNHCR has faced multiple crises on multiple continents, and provided vital assistance to refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced and stateless people, many of whom have nobody left to turn to. [1]

The dream of most refugees is to return home. Since its formation by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1950, UNHCR has helped millions of refugees and displaced persons and has twice received the Nobel Peace Prize. Today, UNHCR's committed staff of over 17,000 people work in 135 countries – saving and protecting the lives of millions of refugees. [2]

UNHCR's primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. In its efforts to achieve this objective, UNHCR strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another State, and to return home voluntarily. [3]

UNHCR now has more than 17,324 personnel working in 135 countries. Their budget, which in its first year was US $300,000, grew to US $8.6 billion in 2019. And in 2020, their 70th anniversary was marked. [4]

As humanitarian crises have become more and more complex, UNHCR has expanded both the number and type of organizations it works with. UNHCR takes the lead for protection and shelter needs, and camp coordination and management. [5]

In response to COVID-19, UNHCR responded with life-saving support such as boosting water and sanitation facilities, increasing access to public health and hygiene.

Topic Introduction

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to tear through the global population, the disease is having an especially devastating impact on the tens of millions of displaced families throughout the world. At this moment, approximately 79.5 million people all over the world have faced the necessity to flee their homes. Amongst those, nearly 26 million are refugees, and half of them are under the age of 18. Currently, 1% of the world's population have fled their homes, this is a result of conflicts of political persecution. [6]

Migrants living in campsites at the doorstep of other countries during the pandemic, face the possibility of a catastrophic COVID outbreak between their friends and families, due to the result of narrow living space with crowdedness. It also would endanger the lives of the people living in the host country [7]. Refugees displaced all over the world face dire living conditions, which puts them at a greater risk of the COVID-19 virus, due to limited access to basic necessities, such as clean water, sanitation systems and adequate health facilities. [8]

Migrant workers tend to be more vulnerable than native workers, to losses of employment and wages during an economic crisis in their host country. The average unemployment rate for foreign workers due to the virus outbreak rose in many nations, and due to losing their jobs, many were unable to return home due to travel bans and disruption of public transports [9]. Lockdowns, travel bans and social distancing measures in response to the crises have disproportionately affected internal migrant workers who found themselves stranded unable to return to their place of work or home, and without access to basic sanitation or health facilities to help them survive such restrictions, refugees and migrants are at a huge risk.

Currently, the UNHCR has taken actions on 12 countries, to aid refugees in the fight against COVID-19 by identifying and attempting to deliver medical equipment, to help monitor the reach of the virus within refugee communities, and taking measures to halt the spread of the said virus. Likewise, supporting communication efforts between multiple community networks, as well as offering assistance on prevention measures, including but not limited to handwashing, social distancing, and how to isolate infected individuals. [10]

Although measures are already being taken by the UN and NGOs, one of the most worrying situations that refugees face at the moment is

the violation of human rights, those refugees being held within formal and/or informal places of detention, are often placed in zones with highly unsanitary conditions, most of those detained in this type of places are migrant children and families, who are detained without sufficient legal basis to be so [11]. Also, countries must ensure that everyone, migrants and refugees included, are able to get equal access to health services and be taken into account in national plans to fight COVID-19, this in order to protect, not only migrants and refugees, but also public health systems and to tackle the spread of this pandemic in an effective manner.

With COVID-19 already a global threat, governments need to address the current challenges and give some assistance by including them in programs that provide health services and social programs to protect these groups who are at risk of spreading the virus - specifically refugees. The focus of the committee should be to uphold basic human rights while supporting the common goals to stop this virus once and for all.

Topic History

Prior to COVID-19, the refugee and migrant population already faced a wide range of de facto barriers to health, economic inclusion, mental health, and access to education. These challenges differ from those faced by host populations; preventing them from being able to obtain decent work and earn an income commensurate with their skills. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has estimated that 70% of refugees live in countries with restricted or no right to work, 66% in countries with restricted or no right to freedom of movement, and 47% in countries with restricted or no right to bank accounts.

A Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19 was launched in March 2019 by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), outlining the responsibilities and roles of different organizations in addressing the humanitarian, health and economic impact of the pandemic. The target of their response is to provide 250 million people with COVID-19 assistance. [12]
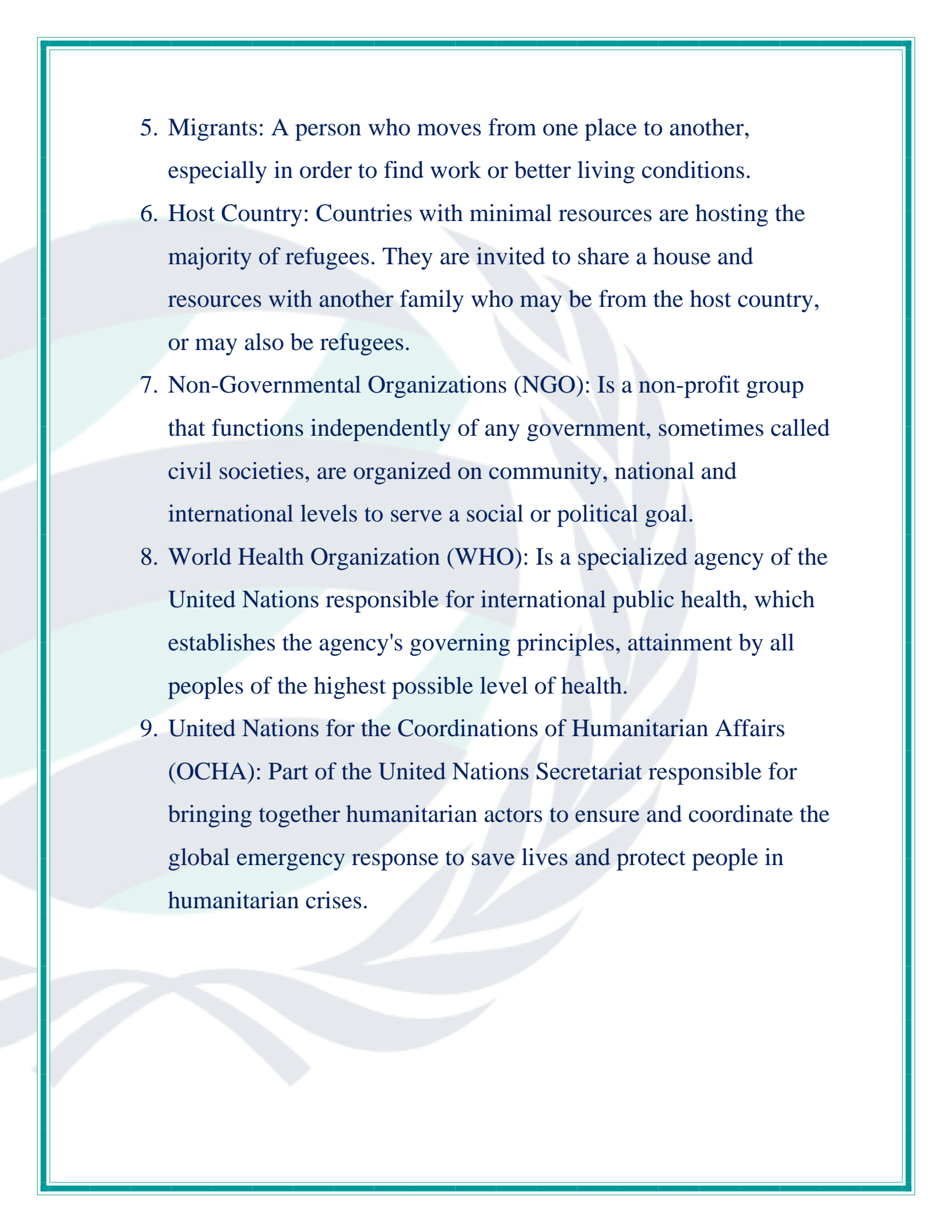
The UNHCR has focused on responding to the health and economic needs of refugees. UNHCR has been the lead UN agency in advocating and ensuring that people of concern and host population groups, who are particularly vulnerable to the pandemic receive COVID-19 assistance. The plan goes as such: distributing shelter material, like sanitary necessities and other core relief items, expanding cash assistance to

mitigate the socio-economic impact of COVID-19, and supporting governments with medical equipment and supplies. [13]

The World Health Organization (WHO) signed an agreement with UNHCR in May of 2020 to boost the provision of health services to forcibly displaced and stateless people. WHO offices in countries with large refugee populations, such as Lebanon, Turkey, and Thailand, have joined efforts with ministries of health to monitor cases and ensure the protection of the refugee community from COVID-19. [14]

Definition of Key Terms:

1. COVID-19: Is a disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus. 'CO' stands for corona, 'VI' for virus, and 'D' for disease. Formerly, this disease was referred to as '2019 novel coronavirus' or '2019-nCoV.'

2. Pandemic: An epidemic occurring worldwide, or over a very wide area, crossing international boundaries and usually affecting a large number of people.

3. Internal Migraine: Is the movement and change of the usual resident of people from one defined area to another within a country.

4. Refugees: A person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster.

5. Migrants: A person who moves from one place to another, especially in order to find work or better living conditions.

6. Host Country: Countries with minimal resources are hosting the majority of refugees. They are invited to share a house and resources with another family who may be from the host country, or may also be refugees.

7. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO): Is a non-profit group that functions independently of any government, sometimes called civil societies, are organized on community, national and international levels to serve a social or political goal.

8. World Health Organization (WHO): Is a specialized agency of the United Nations responsible for international public health, which establishes the agency's governing principles, attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health.

9. United Nations for the Coordinations of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA): Part of the United Nations Secretariat responsible for bringing together humanitarian actors to ensure and coordinate the global emergency response to save lives and protect people in humanitarian crises.

Useful links & resources

1. https://delegatepal.com/
2. http://www.imuna.org
3. https://documents.un.org/prod/ods.nsf/home.xsp
4. http://libraryresources.unog.ch/?b=s
   https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2019/
5. https://www.bmj.com/content/369/bmj.m1632
6. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_764756.pdf